



## ***United States Attorney District of New Jersey***

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### **LONGTIME POLITICAL ADVISER TO JOSEPH VAS SENTENCED FOR ROLE IN CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN FUNDRAISING FRAUD**

NEWARK, N.J. – A Perth Amboy, N.J., man was sentenced today to two years of probation and ordered to pay a \$10,000 fine for participating in a “straw-donor” scheme to funnel contributions to Joseph Vas’s 2006 primary campaign for the Democratic nomination for Congress in New Jersey’s 13th District, United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Raymond Geneske, 75 – who was the Municipal Chairman of the Perth Amboy Democratic Party as well as a member of the Perth Amboy Board of Education (“PABOE”) and the Middlesex County Improvement Authority (“MCIA”) – previously pleaded guilty to an Information charging him with contributing to a federal candidate in the names of others. Geneske cooperated with the government to provide testimony at the trial of Vas, former New Jersey Assemblyman and Perth Amboy Mayor, and Melvin Ramos, Vas’ longtime aide. Geneske entered his guilty plea before United States District Judge Susan D. Wigenton, who also imposed the sentence today in Newark federal court.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

From 2005 to about June 2006, Geneske was a key political adviser to Vas, who was then a candidate in the Democratic primary election for U.S. Congress for New Jersey’s 13th District. Geneske admitted that during that time, he participated in a scheme with others, including Vas, to circumvent the cash limitation and reporting of federal election laws in order to illegally obtain more than \$10,000 in contributions for the “Vas for Congress” campaign committee.

As part of the scheme, Geneske accepted approximately \$5,000 in cash from an individual who was a prominent developer in Perth Amboy (the “Developer”) in February 2006, and then solicited other individuals to write checks out of their personal checking accounts to the “Vas for Congress” committee. Geneske admitted that he provided these individuals with the cash to fund or reimburse their contributions and that he used some of the cash himself to make a contribution in his own name to the “Vas for Congress” committee.

Geneske also stated that in May 2006, he accepted approximately \$25,000 more in cash from the Developer, which Geneske subsequently distributed to fund and reimburse additional “conduit-contributions” to the “Vas for Congress” campaign. In that regard, Geneske stated that he discussed with Vas the fact that he had distributed approximately \$20,000 of the cash from the Developer to “straw-donors” for Vas’s congressional campaign.

In sentencing Geneske, Judge Wigenton made reference to his honest testimony at the Vas and Ramos trial, but stated that “election laws exist for a reason and have to be enforced.”

On October 8, 2010, a federal jury convicted Vas and Ramos of two counts of mail fraud for corruptly misusing Vas’s position as the mayor to misappropriate \$360,000 in affordable housing funds. The jury also convicted Vas of one count of fraud and misapplication of funds in connection with unlawfully misapplying \$90,000 in low income housing funds, one count of making false statements to FBI agents, and one count of accepting contributions to a federal candidate in the names of others. Additionally, the jury convicted Ramos of one count of making contributions to a federal candidate in the names of others and two counts of making false statements to the Federal Election Commission.

Vas and Ramos’ sentencings are currently scheduled for February 22 and 24, 2011, respectively.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward, and special agents of IRS Criminal Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Victor W. Lessoff, for the investigation leading to today’s sentence.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian R. Howe, Deputy Chief, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Jenny R. Kramer, both of the U.S. Attorney’s Office Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.

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Defense counsel: Henry E. Klingeman, Esq. and Anna Cominsky, Esq., Newark